

Circ.: e. 285,797

Page 32-7
X-Econ 2 Russia

Front Edit ✓ Other
 Page Page Page

Date: JUL 12 1955

Soviet Farm Plight

TWO DEALS by which Canada is selling surplus farm commodities to Soviet satellites — 9,000,000 bushels of wheat to Poland, 300,000 pounds of butter to Czechoslovakia — lend substance to recurring reports that Moscow's new mood of gentleness is forced by severe food shortages in the Communist world.

The sales themselves are interesting in the United States because Canadians have been saying that our methods of reducing our farm surplus — gifts and selling cheaply abroad — have unsettled the world market. Poland is buying the wheat from the Canadian wheat board at the going price. Czechoslovakia, however, is buying butter at 37 cents a pound, which is 21 cents under the Canadian support price and a few cents lower than the world price.

The Canadian answer to any criticism of these new sales would be that they are outside the normal channels of western trade, as indeed they are. The United States considered selling butter and other surplus commodities to Communist countries, but the deals fell through. Now, though, one of the strong bargaining weapons America can take to the Geneva conference is our big stock of farm goods. If Moscow wants more of the western nations' food badly enough it may make substantial concessions in the cold war.

The visit to Minnesota and Iowa of a Soviet agricultural delegation, following Khrushchev's lament about Russian farm production, is another sign that the food situation is serious. Speaking about Russian science at Columbia university last month, Allen Dulles, director of the central intelligence agency, said:

"Their agricultural sciences have been backward, plagued like all Soviet agriculture by the follies of the collective system. What farmer will go out into the middle of a cold Russian night to see what ails a state-owned cow?"

Still, Allen Dulles noted evidences that party-line restraints are being relaxed—giving way in the face of plain truths—in many fields, including agriculture. He thought the agricultural delegation might be an indication of developing independence from Marxism and Leninism, under which some zany theories in genetics and farm management were put forth as gospel.

If that be so, the Russians will indeed be welcome to see how farmers fare in a democracy.

CPYRGHT